

COMMITTEE RESOLUTION AMENDING
THE COMMITTEE'S REGULATIONS
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

BUSINESS MEETING
BEFORE THE
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ADMINISTRATION
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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FIRST SESSION

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COMMITTEE RESOLUTION AMENDING THE COMMITTEE'S REGULATIONS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2015

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:17 a.m., in Room 1310, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Candice S. Miller [chairman of the Committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Miller, Harper, Nugent, Davis, Comstock, Walker, Brady, Lofgren, and Vargas.

Staff Present: Sean Moran, Staff Director; John Clocker, Deputy Staff Director; Bob Sensenbrenner, Deputy General Counsel; John L. Dickhaus, Legislative Clerk; Erin McCracken, Communications Director; Katie Patru, Deputy Staff Director: Outreach and Communications; Jamie Fleet, Minority Staff Director; Matt Pinkus, Minority Senior Policy Advisor; Khalil Abboud, Minority Deputy Staff Director/Director of Legislative Operations; Mike Harrison, Minority Chief Counsel; and Eddie Flaherty, Minority Chief Clerk.

The CHAIRMAN. I now call to order the Committee on House Administration for today's Committee hearing. We do have a quorum present, so we can proceed. I would remind members that the record will remain open for 5 legislative days so that members can submit any materials that they wish to be included into the record.

Today, our Committee is going to consider really one important item. The Committee resolution before us will be amending The Member's Congressional Handbook to provide more clarity on current regulations governing the use of official resources, as well as adding new review requirements.

This Committee resolution will also be directing the Chief Administrative Officer, the CAO, to submit to the Committee a proposal on how we would improve the transparency of House expenditures in the quarterly statements of disbursements. It also directs the CAO to review its own internal finance procedures and to provide the Committee with a complete report on how their finance department complies with the Committee's voucher documentation standards.

This Committee, of course, is charged with overseeing the day-to-day operations of the House, and it is a responsibility that I know each of us take very seriously. Members of this institution, each one of us are elected by our constituents and taxpayers; and each of us are accountable to them. We are all sent here to Wash-

ington to represent their views and advocate on their behalf, and that requires our actions to reflect their interests. All of our actions, not just how we vote on the floor of the House, but certainly how we spend our official representational budgets, or as it is commonly called here on the Hill, our MRAs. Members and their staffs have to be held accountable to their constituencies; and our Committee, part of our responsibility certainly is to help provide for that accountability.

So in conjunction with the House Committee on Ethics, House leadership, and other entities, like the CAO, we work to ensure that tax dollars are spent in the most efficient, accountable, and transparent way, and we accomplish this by establishing and regularly reviewing and updating the regulations governing how official resources might be used. We also try to educate House officers about these regulations and working with the CAO to help ensure compliance of our regulations, and to improve public transparency of all of these expenditures.

Of course, like any other entity, we are not immune from individuals who break the rules. We certainly can't force individuals to always do the right thing, but we can make it easier to hold them accountable if they don't. As everyone here is aware, there were some recent questions surrounding a particular Member's use of official resources. Specifically, questions related to the use of official resources for car mileage reimbursement, furnishings and decorations in the Washington, D.C., office, as well as the use of charter flights.

I want to be very, very clear here: The resolution that is being considered today is not suggestive—it is not suggestive—of this particular Member's culpability. This was not an investigation into a particular Member's use of official resources. This is not an investigative body. The resolution that we are considering today is a result of this Committee's internal review of our own regulations and assessments on ways that we can just improve them.

However, it was because of this incident that a lot of questions were raised. It initiated our complete, bipartisan—and let me stress that—bipartisan review of current regulations, as well as House processes and enforcement practices for officials' expenditures.

In response, we established an official review group that was led by Committee members Rodney Davis, who did an outstanding job, and I certainly want to thank him, and his counterpart, Zoe Lofgren, the gentlelady from California. Both of them were former congressional staffers, an interesting thing. Who knew better, really, on how our processes worked? They had so much experience in managing office operations and expenditures.

So, again, I want to thank them sincerely. I will tell you also, this resolution that we are looking at today is essentially their work product. Everybody on this Committee has helped, but it was really them. They have been the lead. They conducted a very thorough review, starting with a complete examination of the regulations and The Member's Congressional Handbook. Specifically, they examined ways they could clarify or tighten regulations and reduce any gray areas.

The review group met with House stakeholders, they met with Members, they met with chiefs of staff, individual Member office financial administrators, employees within the Office of Finance, and various other entities, focused, again, on House transparency. After completing their review and taking into consideration the feedback that they collected, they identified ways that we can strengthen as a Committee and clarify our regulations and improve the transparency of House expenditures.

Again, the resolution being considered by the Committee today reflects their recommendations and directs additional evaluation of House processes that might warrant future changes as well. Always look to the future.

The resolution, effective immediately if the Committee adopts it today, will modify The Member's Congressional Handbook to clarify what type of car mileage is qualified for reimbursement, specifically limiting it to a depreciable asset that you or your family members personally own or personally lease so that there is no confusion. It also adds new thresholds for certain charter flights that will now require prior approval by this Committee.

The resolution also clarifies the regulations for office furniture. Currently, the Member's handbook states that furniture is not reimbursable for the Washington, D.C., congressional office, and this remains the same. The resolution would require Committee approval for a furniture item in the district office if it costs more than \$5,000 per item. And for decorating expenses, only a purchase of nominal value, such as frames or bookends or what have you, has ever been allowed within our current Member's handbook. This remains the same.

In the limited case of fixtures, a Member's office must obtain approval from the Committee for an item exceeding \$5,000. However, again, all decorations should be of nominal value.

In addition to modifying The Member's Congressional Handbook, the resolution also involves the CAO, who is our partner in transparency and helping to ensure that our regulations are followed and that each taxpayer dollar is properly spent. This resolution directs the CAO to create a plan to increase the transparency of office expenditures. It also directs the CAO to conduct a complete review of its finance procedures and to report back to our Committee on how it complies with the stringent documentation standards established by our Committee.

I always have said to my staff, I tell them all the time, that the largest room is the room for improvement. That means that the reforms that we adopt today will likely not be the last that this Committee ever adopts and that we will continue to review our regulations, as we always do.

With that, I would now like to recognize my colleague and the Committee's ranking member, Mr. Brady, the gentleman from Pennsylvania, for the purpose of his opening statement. I would just say again that this review has been extremely bipartisan. The ranking member and I have had a number of conversations about it. And I think we have worked well together, as have our review Committee.

Mr. Brady.

Mr. BRADY. Thank you, Madam Chairman. Thank you for holding this meeting. I have a longer statement for the record, but want to underline the important work this Committee does in making sure public funds and other official resources are used properly. I would also like to commend Ms. Lofgren and Mr. Davis for taking the lead on behalf of the Committee on this project.

I very much appreciate the work of the bipartisan staff that has happened here. Their work has produced some overdue changes to our regulations and will give the taxpayers greater transparency on how our tax dollars are spent.

Madam Chairman, I would like to submit my full statement for the record, and thank you again for having this meeting.

[The statement of Mr. Brady follows:]

October 21, 2015
Committee on House Administration Business Meeting
OPENING STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD FOR RANKING MEMBER ROBERT A.
BRADY

Madam Chairman, I want to thank you for holding this meeting today considering changes to our regulations governing the MRA, which was spurred by allegations disclosed earlier this year relating to our former colleague on this Committee, Mr. Schock of Illinois. We should formally review these policies more often, in addition to the constant oversight done by the bipartisan committee staff from day-to-day.

All Members and the public deserve to be kept apprised of these regulations, and the Committee should take the initiative to resolve questions which Members have or may have about different situations they will confront in performing their official duties. The Committee receives such questions nearly every business day.

While there has generally been bipartisan agreement on the proposal coming before us today, the Democratic members may offer certain modifications to improve and strengthen the majority's proposed text.

I particularly want to thank Mr. Davis and Ms. Lofgren for taking the lead in this project.

The American people expect us to be more transparent in reporting on our travel practices and other expenditures from our Members Representational Allowance, commonly called the MRA, and to follow a strict division between uses of public money in Members' official representational work and private expenditures relating to non-official activities and campaign activities. We should have no hesitation justifying travel to perform the representational responsibilities which the people have elected us to perform. These are proper public services using public funds. All too often Members are attacked for doing their jobs in a professional manner, because the attacks make good press while the daily work of servicing a congressional district may seem routine to those not tasked with performing the work.

However, there are instances where some will attempt to push the envelope beyond the levels of propriety, and that is one of the reasons for today's markup. This Committee has the job of maintaining the rules, modifying and reforming them as needed and exposing irregularities. Funds appropriated for the operations of Congress are a public trust, and do not exist to serve the convenience of individual Members. We must maintain a balance which ensures that funds are properly used while the elected Members of the House have the flexibility to put them to the best possible use to serve their unique constituencies.

I look forward to our discussion today.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman very much.

I now would like to recognize Congressman Rodney Davis. Again, I want to thank him so much for all of his work. There has been a number of months and hours and really a dedicated commitment to looking into this entire process. This work product, as I say, is really essentially Congressman Davis' and Congresswoman Lofgren's as well.

The gentleman from Illinois.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you, Chairman Miller.

As Members of Congress, it is our duty to be good stewards with the tax dollars that we are entrusted with. And this internal process, I believe, was to make sure we uphold that duty.

I would like to again thank Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Brady for allowing us to lead this review process. And I want to send a special thanks to my colleague, Ms. Lofgren, who was my partner in this review process. We would not have gotten to this point without everybody's bipartisan cooperation, and my thanks go to each of you.

As a financial administrator for a Member of Congress for 16 years, this is an issue that is personal to me too. These are issues that I faced when I submitted the paperwork that goes throughout the process that we are reviewing today. Ms. Lofgren and I went through a comprehensive review that engaged Members, staff, Member financial administrators, Member office financial administrators, management of the Office of the CAO, various transparency groups, and also the Ethics Committee.

While our review found no broad patterns of abuse or fraud, we did find areas that we can improve on, many of those mentioned in Chairman Miller's opening statements. Specifically, we need to create more transparency. We need to make sure that we improve the way our expenses are disclosed on the quarterly statements of disbursement, updating the regulations and the guidelines of the Member handbook, and providing further clarity and education, jointly with the Ethics Committee, to Members of what the responsible use of the MRA entails.

The House of Representatives is committed to taking the necessary steps to create that transparent system that ensures taxpayer dollars used to perform official and representational duties are being spent responsibly and within the guidelines of our House rules.

I want to remind this Committee and those who are in attendance that the executive and the judicial branches do not have the same expense transparency requirements imposed on themselves. As we are the people's House, with the constitutional authority to control the purse, we hold ourselves to the highest standards to ensure we are responsible with taxpayer money.

The Committee resolution we will vote on shortly is the result of our comprehensive review and will make the necessary changes to fulfill our commitment to a more transparent, accountable, and responsible House. Again, I would like to thank my colleague Zoe Lofgren for being a great partner throughout this process.

And also, in closing, thank you again, Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Brady, for giving me this opportunity to help improve this great institution.

I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman for his comments. I would now recognize the gentlelady from California, Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren, for her opening statement.

Ms. LOFGREN. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

And thanks also to Mr. Brady for your efforts in getting this review started, and certainly to my colleague, Mr. Davis, who has worked very diligently with me to try and come to a conclusion. We have reviewed a lot of documents, interviewed senior leadership in the CAO's Office, as well as meeting with outside sunshine groups who play a valuable role in looking at the institution, and they all shared proposals with us. We have talked to other Members, House staff about what we could do to improve House operations.

And I think today is a very good start. As we have noticed, there is more work to do. And it is my understanding that the chairwoman is considering holding additional meetings to continue the work of modernizing and reforming the regulations for how Members spend tax dollars, and that is really good news. And I look forward to working with all of my colleagues here on the Committee to make sure that we improve how the House does business.

As Mr. Davis and you have referenced, this is a bipartisan effort. Our Democratic leader sometimes says show a little love. And what that means is let other versions exist. Sometimes you have an idea and another person, but when you really sort through it you can come to a conclusion because you are really trying to get the same thing done. And that is really what this is a product of.

We have put commonsense conditions on the appropriate use of charter aircraft in a way we sorted through the issues so it works, we think, in a way without being bureaucratic to Members who have very rural districts. We have put limits on how Members can use tax dollars to decorate their offices. And as the chairwoman has mentioned, we already have a prohibition on using MRAs for things that are beyond what the House provides. We will find out how that happened in a separate outside review for the one flamboyant instance where that did not occur. But we have emphasized that that is the rule, and the expectation is that we would live with that rule.

We have changed documentation. And I think most importantly, we are going to continue a commitment to transparency by putting office statements of disbursement online in a searchable and sortable format, which gives the data more meaning and the taxpayers additional tools, because the more eyes we have on this, the better off we all are.

Now, I think most Members of Congress, you know, want to play by the rules. The last thing you want is a mess in your office. So we need to be clear on what the rules are so that people can live up to them.

Even though the resolution we are considering has many good changes, I do have one amendment I am going to offer on something we couldn't come to an agreement on, and maybe we can through the amendment process. But I do think this resolution, with the exception of that one amendment, strikes the right balance between giving Members the tools they need and the taxpayers confidence that the tax money is being spent wisely. And I

think it was a good process, and I thank the chairwoman for yielding to me.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Are there any other members of the Committee that wish to offer an opening statement? Okay.

I will now call before the Committee our first agenda item, Committee Resolution 114. This is a Committee resolution amending the Committee's regulations and to instruct the CAO. Without objection, the first reading of this resolution is dispensed with, and the resolution is considered read and open for amendment at any point.

[The information follows:]

Committee Resolution 114_

Resolved that, the regulations of the Committee on House Administration, known collective as “The Member’s Congressional Handbook” are hereby amended as follows:

Section 1. **PRIVATELY-OWNED VEHICLES.** On page 31 (of the *Handbook*), strike the paragraph labelled “**Privately-Owned Vehicles**” and insert in lieu thereof the following:

‘Privately-Owned and Privately-Leased Vehicles

The cost of transportation by Member or employee via a privately-owned or privately-leased vehicle while on official and representational business is reimbursable on a rate-per-mile basis. The maximum rates per mile are:

- Automobile: \$.575
- Motorcycle: \$.545
- Airplane: \$1.29

To confirm that the above represent the current applicable rates, contact the Committee on House Administration at x58281. Each Member may establish a lower reimbursement rate.

For purposes of this paragraph, “privately-owned” and “privately-leased” vehicles do not include any vehicle owned or leased by the principal campaign of a Member, a political-action committee, or a political party.

Reimbursement for use of privately-owned or privately-leased vehicles is permitted only on a rate-per-mile basis and not for fuel purchased or on any other basis.

Only mileage for use of an aircraft that is privately owned by either a Member or the Member’s employee is reimbursable.

Section 2.

In the section titled “Charter Aircraft”, insert the following at the end:

Unless prior written approval is obtained from the Committee on House Administration, a private or charter aircraft between the D.C. metropolitan area

and anywhere cannot be reimbursed from official funds. Contact the Committee on House Administration at x58281 for more information.

Prior to any use of a private or charter aircraft whose anticipated cost for the total itinerary exceeds \$7,500, written approval must be obtained from the Committee on House Administration. Contact the Committee on House Administration at x58281 for more information.

The Committee recommends that charter or private aircraft be used sparingly, and only if/when the Member determines there is no suitable commercial flight available. Please contact the Committee for more information.

Section 3.

In the section titled, "Decorating Expenses", insert the following at the end:
Prior to the purchase of any furnishing whose cost exceeds \$5,000 per item, written approval must be obtained from the Committee on House Administration. Contact the Committee on House Administration at x58281 for more information.

In the section titled "Furniture", insert the following at the end:
Prior to the purchase of any furnishing whose cost exceeds \$5,000 per item, written approval must be obtained from the Committee on House Administration. Contact the Committee on House Administration at x58281 for more information.

Resolved further, that the Chairman of the Committee on House Administration is authorized to make technical and conforming modifications to the Members' Congressional Handbook, and to make other modifications with the concurrence of the Ranking Minority Member and notification to all members of the Committee. In the event changes are made pursuant to this clause, the Chairman shall notify all congressional offices by suitable means.

Resolved that, the Committee on House Administration instructs the Chief Administrative Officer to submit to the Committee a proposal to retire the travel subsistence budget object classification by November 21, 2015.

Resolved further, the Committee on House Administration instructs the Chief Administrative Officer to submit to the Committee a proposal for online availability for any report under 2 U.S.C. § 5535 in a searchable, sortable format by November 21, 2015.

Resolved further, the Committee on House Administration instructs the Chief Administrative Officer to submit to the Committee a report on the internal processes, procedures, and training for compliance with the Voucher Documentation Standards as adopted by the Committee in Committee Resolution 111-6 by November 21, 2015.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, as I mentioned, this resolution will first modify The Member's Congressional Handbook to clarify what type of car mileage is qualified for reimbursement. Currently, The Member's Congressional Handbook says that travel via a privately-owned or privately-leased vehicle while on official or representational business is reimbursable at a rate-per-mile basis. This resolution will apply a new, very specific definition for privately-owned vehicles for the purpose of mileage reimbursement. The new definition makes it clear that to be considered privately owned and eligible for mileage reimbursement, the car must be a depreciable asset that is owned by either the Member or the staff using the car or one of their immediate family members.

Now, obviously this would preclude mileage reimbursement for a vehicle that might be owned by a campaign. That has never been allowed, for taxpayers to reimburse that. But, again, we just want to make it clear.

This resolution will also add a new threshold for charter flights. Our current regulations allow for the use of official resources for Members and staff to travel aboard chartered aircraft, again, only for official business. Today's resolution will add new preapproval requirements for chartered flights. Going forward, any chartered flight to and from Washington, D.C., will require prior approval from this Committee, as will any chartered flight over \$7,500. This travel to and from D.C. is intended to only be used when an emergency arises.

Regarding charter flights, we need to take into account, as has been said here already, that you have many Members of Congress who represent extremely expansive districts, maybe an entire State, with locations that are simply not serviced by commercial airlines, and they need to be able to travel throughout their district. So for some of our colleagues, flying smaller chartered flights is actually the most effective means of transportation.

But, again, to prevent any misuse of official resources for charter flights, this Committee will now need to approve flights that meet the criteria that has been mentioned. Flights originating from Washington versus a Member's congressional district and, again, flights that cost over \$7,500.

Also, this resolution will add a new threshold for office furniture and decorating purchases that will now require prior approval from this Committee before certain purchases can be made. Going forward, again, any furniture item or decorating item that exceeds \$5,000 must receive approval by this Committee.

Again, I want to note, as has been mentioned, I keep reiterating it here, our current regulations prohibit the use of official resources to furnish your Washington, D.C., offices. And in addition to improving our regulations by adding clarity and greater review, one goal of this resolution is to improve transparency of House expenditures, and that will be accomplished in two very meaningful ways.

First, it calls on the CAO to develop a plan to include a more detailed breakdown of travel expenses. Currently, all travel-related expenses reported in the statements of disbursement are now bundled into one line item, which means that you really don't know how much was spent on flights or mileage reimbursement or lodg-

ing or what have you. And going forward, these line items will be broken down.

Secondly, the CAO will be required to present the Committee with a plan to publish the statements of disbursement electronically, again, as has been mentioned, in a searchable, sortable format, unlike what is currently the less user friendly format that we have online today.

Finally, this resolution directs the CAO to review and explain how its Office of Finance complies with our documentation standards. This review we think is very, very important, because with each purchase that an office makes, depending on the type of purchase and the amount of the purchase, certain documentation is required for justification. We just need to make sure that those documents are being collected and reviewed in the finance department.

I certainly think, and I think we all pretty much agree, these are very commonsense revisions that will help provide more clarity to the current regulations and establish what we think is appropriate preapproval requirements. Certainly, the new transparency directives included in this resolution, as well as the additional review of the CAO's financial processes, are very important steps forward towards improving public access and insight on how official resources are spent. Of course that ultimately improves accountability.

Once again, I just want to thank our review team for their recommendations. I look forward to seeing the plans put forth by the CAO. I would recognize Mr. Brady if he has any statement on the resolution.

Mr. BRADY. No.

The CHAIRMAN. All right.

Would any member like to offer an amendment to this resolution?

Ms. LOFGREN. Madam Chair?

The CHAIRMAN. The gentlelady from California is recognized.

Ms. LOFGREN. I have an amendment, amendment number two.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the amendment will be considered as read.

[The information follows:]

AMENDMENT #2
COMMITTEE RESOLUTION 114-___
OFFERED BY MS. LOFGREN

On page 2 of the resolution, immediately before the first resolving clause, insert the following resolving clauses:

“Resolved further, that on page 3 of the *Voucher Documentation Standards* approved by the Committee on July 14, 2010, the requirements applicable to claims for reimbursement in the category labelled ‘**Mileage**’ are amended to read as follows:

- ‘Required travel information (derivative of a travel log) includes the following:
 - a. Name of traveler
 - b. Dates of travel or period during which travel occurred (not to exceed one month)
 - c. Locations of travel, expressed in general terms (e.g., “District office to 2200 block Main Street to District office” or “Home to center city Zipcode 12345 to District office”)
 - d. Number of miles traveled in each journey or segment of journey
 - e. Mileage rate(s) at which travel is to be reimbursed.

A travel log need not be submitted with the voucher, but must be maintained by the office and available for audit. A travel log template is available at *[hyperlink to the form]*’

Resolved further, that the Committee directs the Chief Administrative Officer to take such steps as may be necessary to ensure public disclosure in the *Statement of Disbursements* of details of mileage reimbursements as required by the *Voucher Documentation Standards* approved July 14 2010, as amended by this Committee Resolution.”

Summary of Amendment: Requires documentation for mileage reimbursement to reflect dates on which mileage was driven, the locations of travel expressed in general terms, number of miles driven each day, and the total miles for which reimbursement is sought. Directs the Chief Administrative Officer to ensure full disclosure of mileage details in the *Statement of Disbursements*.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentlelady is recognized for 5 minutes to speak in favor of her amendment.

Ms. LOFGREN. Thank you, Madam Chair.

As you have outlined the resolution, I think there is much merit in what we have before us. I think we will have more transparency and more accountability. So that is a good thing.

The one thing that we did not come to agreement on is greater detail on the voucher documentation standards for mileage. Now, right now you really can't find out very much about where someone is going or on what day. And I am mindful that we have received a letter to you from the Sergeant at Arms expressing concern about details in the statement of disbursements about Members' travel itinerary, providing a clue to where a Member may be at a given time. And quoting from the letter, it says, "While the statement of disbursements lists past travel, one could conceivably review the material to determine a pattern. Once a pattern is identified, an individual could more accurately pinpoint a routine or a frequently traveled route, thus enhancing a Member's vulnerability to unwanted encounters."

I appreciate that the Sergeant at Arms' job is to keep us safe, but I did something last night just to see whether it was doable. I went on the Internet, and in about 10 minutes I could find the home address of members of this Committee. So we are fooling ourselves if we think that putting the taxpayers' money being used for a route is somehow keeping us safe when in about 10 minutes somebody can find out where we live. And as we all know, we have no security in our home. So I just think the Sergeant at Arms, while doing his job, is overreacting, to the detriment of sunshine.

I have three amendments, and the first amendment would specifically provide for point-to-point disclosure. I am not going to offer that in view of the Sergeant at Arms' letter. But amendment number two, which I am offering, would provide for the name of the travel, the dates of the traveler period during which the travel occurred, not to exceed a month, the locations of travel expressed in general terms. For example, your district office, which everyone knows is on the Internet, to a ZIP Code so that people would have an idea of where you are going—it would be a general idea, but at least there would be some sunshine on it—and the number of miles traveled in each journey and the mileage rate.

I think this would increase the transparency of this, and I think it is meritorious. I understand we just couldn't come to agreement in the course of our otherwise very collegial effort. But I do think this is meritorious. I think it deals with the issue—that I disagree with—raised by the Sergeant at Arms.

And so I offer the amendment and recommend that we do one further step on transparency in the matter I have suggested. And I would also ask unanimous consent to put amendment one and three, that I am not offering, into the record of the proceedings.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection.

[The information follows:]

AMENDMENT #1
COMMITTEE RESOLUTION 114-____
OFFERED BY MS. LOFGREN

On page 2 of the resolution, immediately before the first resolving clause, insert the following resolving clauses:

“Resolved further, that on page 3 of the *Voucher Documentation Standards* approved by the Committee on July 14, 2010, the requirements applicable to claims for reimbursement in the category labelled ‘**Mileage**’ are amended to read as follows:

‘Required travel information (derivative of a travel log) includes the following:

- a. Name of traveler
- b. Dates of travel or period during which travel occurred (not to exceed one month)
- c. Location(s) of travel, expressed in specific point-to-point terms (e.g., District office to state office building to District office)
- d. Number of miles traveled in each journey or segment of journey
- e. Mileage rate(s) at which travel is to be reimbursed.

A travel log need not be submitted with the voucher, but must be maintained by the office and available for audit. A travel log template is available at *[hyperlink to the form]*’

Resolved further, that the Committee hereby directs the Chief Administrative Officer, in consultation with other stakeholders, to take every step reasonably necessary to ensure that each reimbursement made to a Member or employee for mileage is publicly disclosed in the *Statement of Disbursements* including the specific information required by the *Voucher Documentation Standards* approved July 14, 2010, as amended by this Committee Resolution.”

Summary of Amendment 1: Revises requirements for substantiation of mileage for official use of a privately-owned or –leased vehicle to 1) include location(s) of travel expressed in terms of specific starting points and destinations, and 2) require the number of miles traveled in each journey or segment of journey. Directs the Chief Administrative Officer to ensure full disclosure of mileage reimbursements details in the *Statement of Disbursements*.

**AMENDMENT #3
COMMITTEE RESOLUTION 114-____
OFFERED BY MS. LOFGREN**

On page 2 of the resolution, immediately before the first resolving clause, insert the following resolving clauses:

“Resolved further, that on page 3 of the *Voucher Documentation Standards* approved by the Committee on July 14, 2010, the requirements applicable to claims for reimbursement in the category labelled ‘**Mileage**’ are amended to read as follows:

‘Required travel information (derivative of a travel log) includes the following:

- a. Name of traveler
- b. Date(s) of travel with number of miles driven each day
- c. Total number of miles driven during period for which reimbursement is sought.
- d. Mileage rate(s) applicable to reimbursement.

A travel log need not be submitted with the voucher, but must be maintained by the office and available for audit. A travel log template is available at *[hyperlink to the form]*’

Resolved further, that the Committee directs the Chief Administrative Officer to take steps necessary to ensure public disclosure in the *Statement of Disbursements* of the details of mileage reimbursements as required by the *Voucher Documentation Standards* approved July 14, 2010, as amended by this Committee Resolution.”

Summary of Amendment: Revises documentation for mileage reimbursement to reflect specific date on which mileage was driven, the number of miles driven on each day, and the total number of miles for which reimbursement is sought. Directs the Chief Administrative Officer to ensure full disclosure of mileage reimbursement details in the *Statement of Disbursements*.

The CHAIRMAN. I would also, if I could respond to the gentlelady, I would also ask UC to enter into the record this letter that you did reference from Paul Irving, who is our Sergeant at Arms. Without objection, so ordered.
[The information follows:]


PAUL D. IRVING
SERGEANT AT ARMS

H-124 CAPITOL
(202) 225-2456

Office of the Sergeant at Arms
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6634

Memorandum

To: The Honorable Candace Miller
Chairman, Committee on House Administration

From: Paul D. Irving 
Sergeant at Arms

Re: Member travel disclosure for Statement of Disbursements

Date: October 20, 2015

The disclosure of Member travel destinations in the Statement of Disbursements may create a security risk to Members as they travel through their district. I would discourage the notation requirement of a Member's departure and destination points in the Statement of Disbursements.

Listing a Member's travel itinerary provides a clue to where a Member may be at any given time. While the Statement of Disbursements lists past travel, one could conceivably review the material to determine a pattern. Once a pattern is identified, an individual could more accurately pinpoint a routine or a frequently traveled route, thus enhancing a Member's vulnerability to unwanted encounters.

The CHAIRMAN. He does specify here about security concerns that he has, and I am in opposition to the gentlelady's amendment. Again, I am very appreciative of all the work that you have done on this, and I think we have just taken such a huge step forward.

You know, one of the other hats I wear, I am the vice chair of the Homeland Security Committee, and perhaps I sat in too many classified briefings. I know there is not a lot of sympathy for Members of Congress, but there is a security risk. I think when you have a letter from the Sergeant at Arms pointing something like this out, we should take this gentleman's comments to heart.

I think that there will be much greater transparency, or certainly accountability—let me say that, accountability in the finance department with the voucher system, et cetera. I just feel that this is a step that is not necessary. But again, I am appreciative of the gentlelady offering the amendment. I will be opposing this particular amendment.

Are there any other members that wish to comment on the amendment?

Mr. NUGENT. Madam Chair, if I may?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, the gentleman from Florida, former sheriff.

Mr. NUGENT. I appreciate that.

I truly want to express my gratitude to Ms. Lofgren and to Rodney Davis for working so diligently on putting this together. Long overdue. I think we would all agree that there is probably other things that we should do as we move forward, whether it is leased vehicles and some of the excesses that we have seen in the past, but that is not what we are talking about today.

I will tell you, coming from the State of Florida that probably has the most open, transparent records system in the United States, but even they saw the need to safeguard law enforcement by not putting their addresses on public documents. It causes you a problem when you go to refinance a home because when they go to a public document search they can't find you.

But that is a safety concern. And I think the State of Florida, like I said, it has the most open, transparent records system in America, has decided, you know, we need to protect those folks. I think that is part of the problem that we see today across this country in regards to, you know, folks that are just upset with government per se.

And I worry, and I agree with the Sergeant at Arms that when you do this and put it on the Net, that it does create an additional concern for those of us who are serving. And, you know, if questioned, obviously we put the detail in to our folks and then they transcribe it and put it in for the disbursement for the statement of disbursements. So that backup information is there in case there ever is a question, whether it comes to Ethics or something else.

I would suggest that all Members keep that information, and I would think most do, because none of us want to have an ethics complaint against us or the FBI coming in and seizing your records. None of that we want to see happen.

But I do think that where we are today, with the hatred that is out there, particularly towards government and government officials, we need to be very, very careful. And I would suggest that we do follow the recommendation of the Sergeant at Arms. While

he is responsible for our safety, and Ms. Lofgren stated it, that they don't provide security at your home.

And so your travel methods—you know, we tell law enforcement change your travel methods, don't take the same route to work every day. Do things that if someone wants to hurt you, it makes it more difficult for them to do that. And I would suggest the same thing holds for Members of Congress.

Ms. LOFGREN. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. NUGENT. I would be glad to yield.

Ms. LOFGREN. I appreciate that. And I think none of us wants Members of Congress to be unsafe. I mean, and you are right, there are people who are unhinged. We certainly remember our colleague Gabby Giffords, who was shot in the head. Of course that was at a publicized meeting, which all of us go and do.

I just put it on the radar screen here. I fly home every week, just like everybody else. And you can go on United Airlines 2 days in advance and you can see my name. It is on the seat I am in, and anybody can see it. So if we think that we are anonymous in terms of our travel, we are not. And I think that it would be very helpful to have it posted for the public. I realize we have a disagreement here. But I just point out this information is in some cases already available.

Mr. NUGENT. Well, I would suggest, though, reclaiming my time—

Ms. LOFGREN. I yield back.

Mr. NUGENT [continuing]. Is that we should err on the side of caution. If anything, from what we have seen, violence in America today, we really ought to be err on the side of caution. While I understand the transparency issue, I think that in our office records it clearly is there if anyone wanted to see it or check.

And I think by things that you are doing in regards to separating air reimbursement for flights, for mileage, I think that then opens up that transparency that we are looking at, because when you see a Member that has this huge number and you can pull up other Members and see everybody else is relatively in this category and you have got one guy or gal way up here, that in and of itself might draw some scrutiny I would think. And I think by putting it online it certainly opens that up to scrutiny.

So, Madam Chair, once again, I really do appreciate all the work that Ms. Lofgren and the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. Davis, have done as it relates to opening this process up for transparency. And with that, I yield back, and I oppose that amendment.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank the gentleman.

Any other members?

Mr. DAVIS. Yes, Madam Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Davis.

Mr. DAVIS. Again, the changes that we have made towards openness, transparency have been phenomenal. And to have only one area of disagreement I think is a testament to how well this Committee worked together in a bipartisan fashion.

Now, I too oppose this amendment. Obviously, we wouldn't have had this disagreement if I didn't. And I appreciate the comments that Mr. Nugent made as a former law enforcement official. I think his comments need to be taken into serious consideration, as the

letter from the Sergeant at Arms, Mr. Irving. But let me address a few other issues that I think are pertinent to this debate.

I appreciate the fact that people know where we live. I would argue, because of my security system at home, because of other methods that I can protect myself and my family with, I am much safer at home than I am traveling throughout my district doing my representational duties. So somebody having my home address, I feel a little bit safer there than I do out on the road at different public events.

And our public schedule many times is released. So, Ms. Lofgren, you are right, many individuals can have access to where we are going. Frankly, I had an experience where I had a group of individuals come talk to me about a very important issue to them at a public meeting, and while I was on my way to another publicly disclosed meeting they decided to visit my home and deliver that same message to my then 12-year-old son. These are issues that we face as Members of Congress, and it is bullying tactics like that that I think are becoming more prevalent in today's day and age.

Now, if security issues don't really concern you as a Member of Congress, if those issues don't concern you, what is great is the processes we have in place right now, you can already by your expense reimbursements, by each voucher request that you submit, you can individualize every single trip. You can put the detail on there, you can individualize it, make an individual expense reimbursement for every single mileage trip that you want to put in there.

So those Members who want to do that can do it. And I will give you an example. When the travel subsistence category came into effect a few years ago, while I was a financial administrator for a Member, I chose not to use that category. So the statement of disbursements for the Member that I worked for still was broken down into the categories that we are going to get to by the time the next legislative year starts. That will add, along with the transparency, sortable, transparent documents that are going to be posted online, will give more transparency to what we do in our Member offices.

So the security issue is real. If somebody isn't concerned about that, you can disclose whatever you want on each individual document submission now. I would urge those Members who feel that that is important to do so. And in the end, I will vote no on this amendment, but, again, it isn't through a lack of appreciation for what we were able to accomplish overall.

And thanks again. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Any other members wish to be recognized to speak on the amendment?

Mrs. Comstock.

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Thank you.

Madam Chairman, I too appreciate all the hard work that the Committee has done. And I just wanted to recommend, as the Committee is looking through how we can do the sorting and have the transparency that we want and really provide the picture in a better way, Virginia has a system that is called the Virginia—it is vpap.org, is the Web site. It is Access Project. And what it does is it takes all the submissions that we have—this is on the political

side, but it would be easily applicable for our MRA—when we submit those documents they are almost immediately able to put them up. And they have a much better sorting system than I have seen on any of the Federal databases that look at our campaign disbursements.

And this is done privately by just a couple of guys. They are privately supported. They are a great resource. And so I would just recommend that the Committee take a look at it. It is vpap.org, v-p-a-p.org. And that Web site is a great model for transparency. Because I know when I put my records in, I actually can see how everything is sorted and how it is spent better than we can do almost ourselves internally. They do it that well.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Very well. Thank you for those comments.

Any other members wish to speak to this amendment? If there are no more comments, we will vote on the gentlelady's amendment. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlelady to the resolution.

All those in favor of the amendment, signify by saying aye.

All opposed, signify by saying nay.

In the opinion of the chair, the nays have it and the amendment is not agreed to.

Ms. LOFGREN. Could I have a recorded vote, Madam Chair?

The CHAIRMAN. There is a recorded vote requested. And the clerk will call the roll.

The CLERK. Mr. Harper?

Mr. HARPER. Nay.

The CLERK. Mr. Harper votes nay.

Mr. Nugent?

Mr. NUGENT. No.

The CLERK. Mr. Nugent votes no.

Mr. Davis?

Mr. DAVIS. No.

The CLERK. Mr. Davis votes no.

Mrs. Comstock?

Mrs. COMSTOCK. No.

The CLERK. Mrs. Comstock votes no.

Mr. Walker?

Mr. WALKER. No.

The CLERK. Mr. Walker votes no.

Mr. Brady?

Mr. BRADY. Yes.

The CLERK. Mr. Brady votes yes.

Ms. Lofgren?

Ms. LOFGREN. Yes.

The CLERK. Ms. Lofgren votes yes.

Mr. Vargas?

Mr. VARGAS. Aye.

The CLERK. Mr. Vargas votes aye.

Chairman Miller?

The CHAIRMAN. No.

The CLERK. Chairman Miller votes no.

The CHAIRMAN. In the opinion of the chair, the nays have it. The amendment is not agreed to.

Are there any other amendments? If not, I would move that the Committee adopt the Committee resolution. The question is on the motion to adopt the resolution.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

All those opposed, say nay.

In the opinion of the chair, the ayes have it, the ayes have it, and the motion is agreed to.

Without objection, the motion to reconsider is laid upon the table.

I would ask, first of all, unanimous consent that a joint explanation statement of today's resolution as it relates to the changes to the Member's handbook be entered into the record. Without objection, so ordered.

[The information follows:]

Explanatory Statement of Mrs. Miller and Mr. Brady

Section 1 of the amendments to the Members' Handbook is designed to only permit the reimbursement of mileage for vehicles owned by a Member or staff in which they or their immediately family have an ownership interest.

Section 2 of the amendments to the Members' Handbook is designed to limit the use of charter or private aircraft. Nothing in that section is intended to limit the ability of a Member or staff to claim personal mileage reimbursement on an aircraft when the aircraft is owned by the Member or staff. Furthermore, prior approval for travel between the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area and anywhere on a private or charter aircraft is intended to be granted only in cases of emergency.

Section 3 of the amendments to the Members' Handbook is designed to create further limitations on the ability to use the MRA for decorations and/or furniture. Nothing in the section should be construed to give Members any new right to purchase fixtures or furniture. The prohibition on purchase of furniture for Washington, D.C. offices remains. Furthermore, the limitation on decorations to only those of nominal value remains. The requirement for approval of items that exceed \$5,000 is intended to apply per item. If, for example, a new district office was setup and purchase 10 \$550 desks, there would be no requirement for approval.

The CHAIRMAN. For all the matters that the Committee has considered today, I would also ask UC that the staff be authorized to make any technical and conforming changes if necessary. Without objection, so ordered.

As we conclude today's markup, I just want to say again I know there was a lot of comment about sometimes things happening in Congress and Congress doesn't take the correct action. But I think what you saw today is really a very good government, a very good government. This is important, I think, that the people of America see that the Congress is reacting to things that happen, that we are very, very desirous of having full transparency of how we utilize taxpayers' finances.

Again, in a time of sometimes people say that, you know, the two parties can't work together, I think what has just happened here today shows that actually the two parties can work together in a very, very good way. As we always call this the people's House, I think the people were very well served today by this resolution. And again, this won't be the end of it. This Committee always is taking a look at what we are doing. Always the largest room is the room for improvement.

Mr. DAVIS. Will the gentlelady yield very quickly?

The CHAIRMAN. Absolutely I will yield.

Mr. DAVIS. In the midst of all of this, trying to make sure we got these changes through, I forgot to thank, and I think most of us forgot to thank the hard work that our staffs on both sides of the aisle did in helping to make this a reality today. So I would like to submit a congratulations to each of them for all the hard work that they put in. And my apologies for unfortunately waiting until the end of the hearing.

Ms. LOFGREN. I would like to join in that thanks for both staffs.

The CHAIRMAN. I would join in that as well. I know that on our side and on the other side the staffs did put a tremendous amount of hours into this work product. So it has been a truly, as I say, bipartisan, team effort. Something I think we can all take a lot of pride in, most importantly, the people that we serve.

With that, this concludes today's markup. Without objection, this meeting is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:57 a.m., the Committee was adjourned.]